

## Pastor and People.

### ASLEEP

BY M. GRANT FRASER.

Found dead in her bed before daybreak  
Just like a spotless snow-drop.  
Bending its head to rest ;  
There lay your baby sleeping  
With white hands on her breast.

When mystic night was calmest  
And all the air was sweet,  
Your room Christ entered softly,  
Moving with noiseless feet.

And, O! your darling knew Him,  
As He bent beside her bed,  
What was the message whispered?  
What were the words He said?

Her smiling lips just parted ;  
Forgetting tears and pain.  
Safe in the Shepherd's bosom,  
Safe in His arms again.

And then from the silent chamber  
Two passed where one had come,  
Back to the Lord who gave her,  
Back to the Father's home.

But sudden your tender heart-strings  
Knew chords were rent in twain ;  
Your babe was born to heaven  
With throes of mother pain.

And there lay your folded lily,  
In Jesus fast asleep.  
She might not know your anguish ;  
She could not hear you weep.

But a tiny hand is pleading,  
Yearning in changeless love,  
Calling you ever upward  
To baby's home above.

That when the Saviour enters  
Again with noiseless feet,  
You too may turn with gladness,  
His coming steps to greet.

For, O! your darling knew Him,  
As He bent beside her bed,  
What was the message whispered?  
What were the words He said?

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### ON PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

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#### NO. XVIII.—PREACHING THAT SAVES THE HEARER

The benefits that flow from preaching are many and diverse, according to the particular parts of the truth of God that are brought to the front and pressed upon the conscience. When the Word of God is rightly divided, there are no conditions of soul, no circumstances of life, that are not met by it, with just what these require, to make the individual rest in the Lord, and be valiant for Him, and strong, noble and Christlike. It is a treasurehouse of all spiritual blessing. Hence there is preaching that is comforting, or that is educative, or that is interpretive of spiritual conditions ; or that warns, or incites, or saves. Preaching that discovers our need, or the divine provision for that need, or that brings us to appropriate that provision to satisfy our need. The theme will be varied as the Lord directs the mind of His servant to see the condition of the people. But however the mind of the minister may see, and however he may be led to speak, there is one theme that will be kept persistently to the front, and that embodies the truth that saves—the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as the atonement for sin, and by that, as the only Saviour of men. And moreover, as a present Saviour, a personal Saviour, a perfect Saviour. The very Saviour each poor sinner needs, and needs to day, and needs forever.

One cannot read the Old Testament without having burned into his soul this truth which shines so gloriously in the New Testament—"Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." In Leviticus we see God's appointed offering brought to the priest ; the sinner for whom it is to suffer confesses his sin upon its head, and laden with imputed sin, it dies, and the sinner lives on because the sacrifice He has offered has made an atonement for his soul. The lamb or the bullock or the dove "is accepted for him, to make atonement for him."

This is the fundamental truth of the Bible, that the sinner is saved from death by the substitution of another in his place, One holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners ; One who offers Himself as a sacrifice ; One who is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. That comes before the eye and appeals to the heart everywhere in the Bible. That is the living nerve of the entire body of divine revelation. That is the truth that saves. How many forms it assumes ! and through all it is essentially the same. See Isa. liii. 5, John i. 29, Gal. iii. 13, 1 Peter iii. 18, Heb. ix. 26, Phil. ii. 6-11.

All life-giving efficacy lies in the death of Christ ; and flows from it to men. His life is beautiful, His example is unique and marvellously inspiring, but these do not of themselves redeem us—only as they are taken in vital connection with His death. He came to die, He did not die because He had come into the world. His great object was to lay down

His life for sinful men. Miss this in the Book, and its key is lost. This is the very core of Scripture doctrine. Listen, "I am the Good Shepherd ; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." This truth awakens the sweet music of gracious promise and glorious prophecy at the dawn of this world's day, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." And at its close it crowns it with triumphant song. "Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof ; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the earth." The world is bound up in a zone of atoning sacrificial grace. Its history is brightened and blessed by its light and love and labour. It is throughout the redeeming force, the transforming energy. The preaching of it whether by Moses, or the Prophets, or the Apostles, or the ministers of the Church through all the centuries is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

The cross of Christ is God's saving ordinance.

That deals with the roots of things. It enables men to realize their lost condition—their utterly hopeless condition, and it makes provision for that. It lays the foundations of salvation and peace on the solid and immovable rock of the divine love, and mercy, and holiness, and justice, so that while it meets all the hunger of the heart and conscience, it glorifies and honours God. It humbles man as the sinner, it exalts Christ as the Saviour, and it celebrates the praise of God the Father who could not let His children go away into perdition. It is thorough in its treatment. It does not heal slightly the daughter of God's people crying, Peace ! Peace ! where there is no peace. It witnesses to the eternal truth both as to man and as to God. He who keeps a close, consistent grip upon that truth, and preaches it fully and perseveringly, not turning aside to other tempting but temporary themes, will be most honoured of God in the long run. Dr. William Taylor, of New York, makes this just observation : "Doubtless Luther was a great man, yet in his day there were many other men as largely dowered with intellectual gifts as he, but none of them performed the work he did BECAUSE NONE OF THEM PREACHED THE SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST AS HE PROCLAIMED IT. Read his 'Lectures on the Galatians' and you will find that he sets forth this doctrine of Christ's substitution in the room of the sinner in the most objective form, and iterates and reiterates the truth that He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

What is true of Luther is true of all others largely used of God in saving men. Was not this the case with our Puritan forefathers? What made Nettleton such a power in the United States? What enabled William C. Burns and McCheyne and the Bonars, and the Erskines to touch so deeply the hearts of men? What girded Whitfield and the Tennants with power to break up old modes of thinking and to fashion new modes of life for their fellows? Wherein lay the strength of Augustine and Edwards and Owen and Howe and Fuller? What is the secret of Moody's success, and of those who are imitating him? The one answer to all these questions is—The cross of Christ! The books that live, the songs that survive the tempest and the storm of time are those that are full of the truth all men in all ages need—the redemption through the cross of Calvary. Those sermons and those songs that most simply and most clearly tell out the old, old story of Jesus and His love, get closest to the soul and abide longest in the affections.

The everlasting fragrance of Jesus' death perfumes everything it touches. It is for all a preserving element. That is the everdurable charm of "Rock of Ages," "Jesus lover of my soul," "Just as I am without one plea," and their like.

Christ as the sinbearer, Christ as the sinner's substitute, Christ as the atonement for sin, is the truth that saves. That must never be forgotten. Some years ago, a company of Americans were shaking hands with Mr. C. H. Spurgeon after the morning service in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. As they did so they were making their acknowledgments of blessing received through his printed works, and Mr. Spurgeon said more than once in response, "I only preach the Gospel. I know nothing more." Is that not true? His sermons, whatever be the theme, have each saving truth in them. Truth that leads the sinful soul to Jesus. Truth that discovers God's plan of salvation for lost men. Truth that makes the way of life so plain that anyone may believe and live. Other preaching is called for and must be given, but this is essentially necessary.

Mathew Henry makes this judicious observation : "the Scriptures are the circumference of faith, the round of which it walks, and every point of which compass it toucheth ; yet the centre of it is Christ. That is the polar star, on which it resteth." Elton the missionary to the Indians speaks thus to young ministers : "Let there be much of Christ in your ministry." Cotton Mather touches the same note : "Exhibit as much as you can of a glorious Christ ; yet let the motto of your ministry be—Christ is all." "Christ and Him crucified" is a theme that never grows old and never loses its power. Many to-day are searching for the secret of John McNeill's power. What is it? It is his faith in the Gospel of Christ. His belief in the necessity of repentance, conversion, regeneration, and faith in the one sacrifice for sin. On these he dwells with a persistence that is noble and grand. By that he is distinguished from scores of ministers in the

United Kingdom. That is always attractive. Bishop Horne very naively said in his day, even though it was witnessing against his own Church. "Many well-meaning Christians at this time thirst after the doctrine of the Gospel, and think they have heard nothing, unless they have heard of salvation by Jesus Christ, which is what we properly call the Gospel ; and if they do not hear it in discourses from our pulpits, where they expect to hear it, they are tempted to wander in search of it to other places of worship." Ah, yes, the hungry sheep will find the green pastures somewhere. Nothing can meet the soul's deep need but the Gospel. Only that can satisfy all our nature and give it true divine rest.

### LESSON FROM THE REED.

The weak, unpretentious reed, living out its frail and quiet life at the water's edge, has become, under Christ's use of it, a sermon for trembling hearts and weak steps in all times. "The bruised reed will He not break." That feeble fluttering movement of the desire and confidence of the tired and weary heart toward Jesus is as tenderly welcomed and lovingly upheld as is the faint lisp of the helpless babe for mother's lullaby and keeping. Behind every purpose that in any degree lifts itself heavenward is the energizing power of the brooding Holy Ghost. The slightest movement of the will toward the right is fostered and sympathized with by the divine will. We tread no steps of honest, manly effort alone.

We need to keep this fact well in mind, lest the very feebleness of the beginning of a better purpose seem to mock us with its helplessness. Satan is on hand in all such experiences, loath to lose a prisoner, and suggesting every argument as to the uselessness of any attempt to better one's condition. But it is one of the solid facts of this every-day life that the master gardener, Jesus, walks about His garden day and night sheltering, invigorating, and building up into strength every plant, though it lie as prone as the "bruised reed." The very fact of our weakness and insufficiency is of itself an argument and a cord that draws Him to our help. An honest cry of any heart to Jesus will bring Him instantly without thought on His part, either on our merit or demerit. He only asks this much, that it be from the heart ; iniquity covered up, one face for Him and one for the devil, does not bring Him. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." But the faintest effort of the heart enslaved in sin, to free itself from its chains, is sure of the strong arm which the prophet said should "break every chain, and set the captive free."

### HIGH CHURCHISM.

The Rev. Dr. John Hall writes : The evils against which the Reformers protested need to be justly estimated and correctly represented in our own time, and nowhere more than in the United States ; but the germs of the moral disease must, if possible, be effectively dealt with. Here, for example is a specimen of the germs : The Bishop of London on the 21st of March last, "with prayer and exhortation and symbolical acts appointed certain laymen to preach and conduct divine service in consecrated buildings." Now there is an influential English weekly, the self-appointed *Guardian* of High Church interests, which characteristically describes this as the deed of a "bold" official who has "enriched the Church of England with a new order of ministers." In an elaborate article the *Guardian* admits that lay assistants might sometimes be useful to "priests," especially to those overworked by the increasing number of public services—matins, vespers, etc., we presume ; but the question is, Can the thing be done without injury to the real life of the Church? Is the consecrated layman to "administer the chalice?" This "startling proposal" has been made, and the *Guardian* says, after properly warning against "strange doctrines," from such :—

"The mischief which chiefly threatens lies in another direction. Nothing is more important than that unlearned members of the Church (and learned ones, too, for that matter) should apprehend clearly and bear steadily in mind, first, the awful and essential distinction which separates the Eucharistic mysteries from every other part, however edifying, of the Church's public service, and then, strictly in connection with this truth, the indelible difference between those who bear and those who do not bear the august commission of the priesthood. If the experiment which the Bishop of London has inaugurated, with its unaccustomed spectacle of "dedicated laymen" preaching and ministering in consecrated places, tends to obscure these vital distinctions, it may be followed by lamentable and even fatal consequences."

This is really the point to which Protestants have to look at the present time. The theory that the sacrament has its efficacy from the administering priest is the germ of many a religious disorder. Then the "priest" has to be in the "succession." The *Guardian*, therefore, will not object to such men "holding special services at sacred seasons and for special objects ; even conducting the three hours' devotion on Good Friday," but the "claim of the lay preachers, High Churchmen and Low alike, that they should be allowed to administer the chalice of the Holy Communion"—that has to be resisted at all costs, not as a thing of order merely, but of the essential principle of the Church. Now, the moment the *Guardian's* theory is accepted, sacerdotalism is made an inclined plane, down which it is easy and natural to slide into Vaticanism.